

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A computer implemented method, comprising the steps of:  
monitoring the computing activities of a user of a computer;  
5 determining if the computer user appears to be interested in a declared topic  
based on the monitored activities and based on information stored in a database that is  
associated with the declared topic; and  
notifying the computer user that the topic has been declared if it appears that the  
computer user is interested in the declared topic.

10 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of monitoring the activities of  
the user comprises the step of monitoring one or more e-mail messages sent to and/or  
from the user.

15 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of monitoring one or more e-  
mail messages sent to and/or from the user comprises the step of examining one or more  
e-mail messages transmitted to and/or from the computer.

20 4. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of monitoring one or more e-  
mail messages sent to and/or from the user comprises the step of retrieving from an e-  
mail server one or more e-mail messages addressed to the user and/or sent by the user  
and examining the contents of those e-mail messages.

25 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of monitoring the activities of  
the user comprises the step of examining one or more instant messages sent to and/or  
from the user.

30 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of monitoring the activities of  
the user comprises the step of monitoring one or more search request messages sent  
from the user.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the step of monitoring one or more search request messages sent from the user comprises the step of examining one or more search request messages transmitted from the computer.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
determining whether the computer user desires to receive information about the declared topic after notifying the computer user that the topic has been declared; and  
retrieving from the database information about the declared topic, wherein the information was inputted into the database by an entity that declared the topic.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the information stored in a database that is associated with the declared topic comprises one or more keywords.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the step of monitoring the computing activities of a user of a computer comprises the step of examining one or more messages sent from and/or to the user.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the step of determining if the computer user appears to be interested in the declared topic comprises the step of determining whether N or more of the examined messages includes one of the one or more keywords, where N is a number greater than zero.

12. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
determining whether the user selected to be added to a group e-mail address and/or virtual team associated with the topic;  
adding the user to the group e-mail address if it is determined that the user selected to be added to the group e-mail address; and  
adding the user to the virtual team if it is determined that the user selected to be added to the virtual team.

13. A computer signal embodied in a carrier wave readable by a computing system and encoding a computer program of instructions for executing a computer process performing the method recited in claim 1.

5

14. A system, comprising:  
monitoring means for monitoring the computing activities of a user of a computer;

determining means for determining if the computer user appears to be interested in a declared topic based on the monitored activities and based on information stored in a database that is associated with the declared topic; and

notifying means for notifying the computer user that the topic has been declared if it appears that the computer user is interested in the declared topic.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein the monitoring means comprises means for monitoring one or more e-mail messages sent to and/or from the user.

16. The system of claim 15, wherein the means for monitoring one or more e-mail messages sent to and/or from the user comprises means for examining one or more e-mail messages transmitted to and/or from the computer.

17. The system of claim 15, wherein the means for monitoring one or more e-mail messages sent to and/or from the user comprises means for retrieving from an e-mail server one or more e-mail messages addressed to the user and/or sent by the user and for examining the contents of those e-mail messages.

18. The system of claim 14, wherein the monitoring means comprises means for examining one or more instant messages sent to and/or from the user.

19. The system of claim 14, wherein the monitoring means comprises means

for monitoring one or more search request messages sent from the user.

20. The system of claim 19, wherein the means for monitoring one or more search request messages sent from the user comprises means for examining one or more search request messages transmitted from the computer.

21. The system of claim 14, further comprising:  
determining means for determining whether the computer user desires to receive information about the declared topic after notifying the computer user that the topic has been declared; and

retrieving means for retrieving from the database information about the declared topic, wherein the information was inputted into the database by an entity that declared the topic.

22. The system of claim 14, wherein the information stored in a database that is associated with the declared topic comprises one or more keywords.

23. The system of claim 22, wherein monitoring means comprises means for examining one or more messages sent from and/or to the user.

24. The system of claim 23, wherein means for determining if the computer user appears to be interested in the declared topic comprises means for determining whether N or more of the examined messages includes one of the one or more keywords, where N is a number greater than zero.

25. The system of claim 14, further comprising the steps of:  
determining means for determining whether the user selected to be added to a group e-mail address and/or virtual team associated with the topic;  
means for adding the user to the group e-mail address if it is determined that the user selected to be added to the group e-mail address; and

means for adding the user to the virtual team if it is determined that the user selected to be added to the virtual team.

26. A computer program product, the computer program product being embodied in a computer readable medium and comprising computer instructions for:

monitoring the computing activities of a user of a computer;  
determining if the computer user appears to be interested in a declared topic based on the monitored activities and based on information stored in a database that is associated with the declared topic; and

notifying the computer user that the topic has been declared if it appears that the computer user is interested in the declared topic.

27. The computer program product of claim 26, wherein the instructions for monitoring the activities of the user comprises instructions for monitoring one or more e-mail messages sent to and/or from the user.

28. The computer program product of claim 27, wherein instructions for monitoring one or more e-mail messages sent to and/or from the user comprises instructions for examining one or more e-mail messages transmitted to and/or from the computer.

29. The computer program product of claim 27, wherein instructions for monitoring one or more e-mail messages sent to and/or from the user comprises instructions for retrieving from an e-mail server one or more e-mail messages addressed to the user and/or sent by the user and examining the contents of those e-mail messages.

30. The computer program product of claim 26, wherein instructions for monitoring the activities of the user comprises instructions for examining one or more instant messages sent to and/or from the user.

31. The computer program product of claim 26, wherein instructions for monitoring the activities of the user comprises instructions for monitoring one or more search request messages sent from the user.

5 32. The computer program product of claim 31, wherein instructions for monitoring one or more search request messages sent from the user comprises instructions for examining one or more search request messages transmitted from the computer.

10 33. The computer program product of claim 26, further comprising instructions for:  
determining whether the computer user desires to receive information about the declared topic after notifying the computer user that the topic has been declared; and  
15 retrieving from the database information about the declared topic, wherein the information was inputted into the database by an entity that declared the topic.

20 34. The computer program product of claim 26, wherein the information stored in a database that is associated with the declared topic comprises one or more keywords.

35. The computer program product of claim 34, wherein instructions for monitoring the computing activities of a user of a computer comprises instructions for examining one or more messages sent from and/or to the user.

25 36. The computer program product of claim 35, wherein instructions for determining if the computer user appears to be interested in the declared topic comprises the step of determining whether N or more of the examined messages includes one of the one or more keywords, where N is a number greater than zero.

30 37. The computer program product of claim 26, further comprising

instructions for:

determining whether the user selected to be added to a group e-mail address  
and/or virtual team associated with the topic;

5 adding the user to the group e-mail address if it is determined that the user  
selected to be added to the group e-mail address; and

adding the user to the virtual team if it is determined that the user selected to be  
added to the virtual team.

10